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## Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 22, 1961

**SUBJECT:** Volta River Project

**PARTICIPANTS:** W. M. Q. Halm, ~~Ghanaian Ambassador to the United States~~
Mr. G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Mr. Wendell B. Coote, Acting Director, Office of West African and Malagasy Affairs

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Ambassador Halm, rather crestfallen and dejected, said that he came in to inquire about the several disturbing reports which he had been hearing and reading that the United States Government had decided to delay a decision on the Volta project. Specifically, he inquired about an AP article entitled "U.S. Puts Brake on Ghana Aid" which appeared in the September 22 issue of Washington Post. He also was concerned that he had not yet received the Department's reply to his letter of September 14 in which he stated that the Government of Ghana had set October 5 as the date for signing the Volta agreements and asked who the U.S. representatives at the signing ceremonies would be. Finally, he said that he had heard that Mr. Reap (an Assistant press officer) had stated at a State Department press briefing this afternoon that it would be "impossible" for the United States to sign the agreement in Accra on October 5.

Governor Williams pointed out that Ghana had unilaterally selected October 5 as the date, and that we weren't able to agree to this date because we didn't know if all the final negotiations would be completed in time. Mr. Coote added that even before the Department had received Ambassador Halm's letter announcing October 5 as the date, we had informed our Ambassador in Accra that we believed there would be difficulties in our meeting this date. The reason that we had not yet replied to the letter is that we were hoping that if we waited a few days we would be in a better position to give a more definitive reply. Governor Williams promised that the Department would send a formal answer shortly.

Governor Williams

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Governor Williams then went on to say that this was a very complicated project involving a multiplicity of agreements not only among Governments but internally between the U.S. Government and the VALCO consortium. We were in the process of making a final check of all the arrangements and this had not yet been completed.

With respect to Ambassador Halm's understanding as to what Mr. Reap said at the press briefing, Mr. Coote called Mr. Reap. The latter emphatically stated that he had not said it was impossible to sign on the 5th. In response to a question as to whether he expected that the signing would not take place on October 5, Mr. Reap replied, "I don't know when the signing will take place. As I have told you, there has been no decision to slow it down, the thing is now in the final stages of normal review."

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